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WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
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TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: EXPANDED ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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Gaza and Northern West Bank Disengagement

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Key stories in the media:  
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Ha'aretz's web site reported that the U.S. sees Gaza as a starting point in the peace process, but quoted a State Department official as saying it was clear little may get done in the months after the pullout. The unnamed official quoted as saying, "Our plan is to urge both sides to get back to dialogue but we have to see how this goes. You can't script this too much." Hatzofe (Haggai Huberman) reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice might visit Israel shortly to follow up on the implementation of the pullout from the Gaza Strip. The newspaper cited GOI assessments that, further to providing support to Sharon during the disengagement, the visit's objective will be to ensure that there will be no diplomatic freeze after it.

Last night at midnight, the electronic media reported live on the permanent closure of the Gaza Strip to Israelis, which marked the start of the disengagement (leading stories in all media). Israel Radio reported that several hundred young people, many of them non-residents, created disturbances in Gush Katif, and that nine protesters were arrested in the northern West Bank. Ha'aretz reported that, despite expectations, most Gush Katif residents are still there. However, Jerusalem Post and other media note that 280 of the 290 families of Nissanit, the Strip's second largest settlement, have moved out, and that all the residents of Dugit (also in the northern Strip) will leave today. Jerusalem Post reported that the IDF is ready to evacuate the northern West Bank settlements of Ganim and Kadim from Wednesday if the cabinet approves such a move. The radio also reported that many settlers are refusing to accept from the army evacuation letters, which state that the operation will be conducted by force starting Wednesday. Israel Radio and IDF Radio reported that this morning the cabinet voted in favor of the evacuation of Gush Katif, the largest settlement bloc in the Gaza Strip, further Gaza Strip settlements. The vote was 16 in favor and four against. Labor ministers backed the measure. The dissenting votes were cast by Likud ministers Limor Livnat, Tzachi Hanegbi, Yisrael Katz and Danny Naveh.

Leading media reported that PM Sharon will deliver a speech to the nation in which he will supposedly empathize with, but not apologize, to, the settlers.

PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas was quoted as saying in an interview broadcast last night on Channel 10-TV that Israel is advancing in the right direction but that Israelis should not forget that the pullout from Gaza is only the beginning. Abbas also said that Israelis would be welcomed in Gaza as tourists. Jerusalem Post quoted PA security officials as saying that some 15,000 Palestinian policemen have been recruited for the purpose of preventing armed groups from disrupting the Israeli pullout. Israel Radio reported that 4,000 Palestinian policemen have already been deployed around the settlements. On Sunday, Jerusalem Post quoted senior PA officials as saying that the PA is planning to move thousands of PLO fighters from Lebanon to the Gaza Strip after the disengagement. Israel Radio quoted Hamas leader in Gaza Mahmoud Zahar as saying in the Egyptian daily Al-

Ahram that his movement will transfer its activity to the West Bank and eventually to Jerusalem.

Israel Radio quoted Palestinian sources as saying that a meeting held last night between Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef was fruitless. The station reported that sources in Yousef's bureau blamed the Israeli representatives for the failure of the talks, citing "their negative attitude regarding military coordination of the disengagement

Israel Radio reported that mortar shells were fired at southern Gush Katif last night, causing no damage.

Southern Command O/C Maj. Gen. Dan Harel was quoted as saying in an interview with Ha'aretz that he would not have volunteered to implement the settlers' evacuation, and that "the IDF was chosen to be the execution instrument of the tragedy."

On Sunday, Ha'aretz reported that Palestinian laborers will not be compensated for the loss of their jobs in the Gaza settlements' hothouses.

Yediot reported on "bad news for high-tech workers": the USG announced during the weekend that the allotment of H1B visas for 2006 has been exhausted. The newspaper notes that 800-1,000 Israeli engineers obtain work annually in the U.S. through this type of visa.

Citing the Israeli press agency Itim, Hatzofe reported on a claim by convicted spy Jonathan Pollard, in a petition to the High Court of Justice, that Shimon Peres, who served as PM at the time of his arrest, returned the documents Pollard had seized to then-Secretary of State George Shultz, thus paving the way

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for his conviction.

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Gaza and Northern West Bank Disengagement:  
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Summary:  
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Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "When Yitzhak Rabin said he'd prefer to see Gaza drown in the sea, he was expressing, crudely, what many Israelis felt."

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "In Sharon's speech to the nation this evening, he won't apologize to the settlers. They have already exhausted their right to protest, and now they are damaging the authority of the state, its strength and its democratic regime."

Editor-in-Chief Amnon Dankner wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "This week will spin Israeli society and many of its components ... between despair and hope, the latter against the background of the consoling words of praise of the President of the United States and on the other hand the Palestinian celebrations full of haughtiness. Until now it has succeeded in not falling apart."

Prominent liberal author David Grossman wrote in Ha'aretz: "We should all take a deep breath right now and remind ourselves that, in the final analysis, the days to come are days of mourning for all Israelis."

Conservative columnist Nadav Haetzni wrote in Maariv: "Real disengagement from the Palestinians won't take place, but emergent disengagement among the various components of Israeli society will definitely be achieved."

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized: "[Likud politicians and allies] can still bring down the immoral foundation of Sharon's leadership and government."

Editor-in-Chief Bassam Jaber wrote in left-leaning, Arabic-language weekly Panorama: "We ... believe that the withdrawal plan is one step on the way to a complete withdrawal from the Palestinian territories."

Block Quotes:  
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1I. "Gaza First"

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (August 15): "It is going to be hot, humid and sticky this morning at the entrance to Kissufim road, and closed. The barrier has been shut on 38 years of occupation in the Gaza Strip and on 29 years of settlement.... The occupation of the Gaza Strip brought very little pleasure to either the occupiers or the occupied. When Yitzhak Rabin said he'd prefer to see Gaza drown in the sea, he was expressing, crudely, what many Israelis felt. Gaza was, as one person once wrote, Israel's armpit: poor, densely populated, fanatical, violent and polluted, the pool from which Israel drew a generation of menial laborers.... With the disengagement plan Sharon is trying, in his own way, to live out Rabin's fantasy: if we can't drown Gaza in the sea, at least we can turn our backs on it. To feel as if we are free of it.... After the settlers' tears have dried, after the media dust has settled, what will be left imprinted on everyone's mind will be that for the first time settlements were removed from what is considered to be the Land of Israel. This step is tremendously significant, both socially and politically. The settlers have lost the veto power they once possessed over the evacuation of settlements. Rabin, Peres and Barak, three prime ministers who wanted to evacuate settlements, were daunted by the immense power the settlers wield. Sharon was braver than they: he dared to put that legend to the test, and he did so unilaterally.... It is no wonder that the religious settlers are fighting disengagement with all their might: they are fighting for their status, their existence, their faith. They won't be able to raise the barrier that was lowered last night at Kissufim roadblock; they have their eye on the roadblocks yet to come. In their view, the battle is over the Land of Israel. In the view of the commanders of the police and soldiers who will face them, it is a battle over the authority of the state."

## II. "The Dream Is Over"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (August 15): "The goal [of disengagement] was to relocate communities that we wouldn't keep anyway in any final settlement. ... In his detailed narrative, [Sharon] correctly predicted that the implementation would be complicated -- both in a political and operational sense -- and that a year and a half to two years would be needed to complete it. He foresaw the political difficulties he would encounter with the Likud institutions. But what my ear discerned more than anything was the statement: 'Don't see this evacuation as the end of the process.' In other words, he had reached a decision, by himself, about dividing the land. This was Sharon's divorce from the settlers and his farewell to the idea of Greater Israel. As he said: 'We had a dream, but it cannot be implemented'.... This morning 1,200 officers will give the settlers their evacuation orders, with orders that they must leave their homes within 48 hours. Starting Wednesday, every Israeli, whether settler or infiltrator, will be forcibly evacuated from the Gaza Strip. The decision to evacuate passed in the cabinet, the Knesset and the High Court of Justice. But the Yesha Council settlers, the extremists, the hilltop youth, the Kahanists and some of the rabbis have declared a revolt against the authority of the state. From rally to rally, from provocation to provocation, from threat to threat, they determined to forcibly thwart the evacuation by infiltrating in their thousands into Gaza, with the IDF as the enemy.... In Sharon's speech to the nation this evening, he won't apologize to the settlers. They have already exhausted their right to protest, and now they are damaging the authority of the state, its strength and its democratic regime. They dare not lift a finger against the army or the police, lest they transform the continued existence of the state into a dream."

## III. "Country in Turmoil"

Editor-in-Chief Amnon Dankner wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (August 14): "This week will spin Israeli society and many of its components into public and private conflicts between emotion and thought, between various perceptions of democracy, between conflicting understandings of the boundaries of protest and opposition, between despair and hope, the latter against the background of the consoling words of praise of the President of the United States and on the other hand the Palestinian celebrations full of haughtiness. Until now it has succeeded in not falling apart in the force of the emotions that contradict the bonds that keep it whole. The gloomy prophecies that prevailed

regarding such a violent disintegration have been proven false, and now it remains to see whether there will be enough insight to restrain the wild elements at the fringes of the camp, to overcome the tearing pain, to continue to show responsibility and to emerge whole from this shake-up that in the past tore and ripped apart societies and countries that appeared to be strong and united."

#### IV. "Something to Mourn"

Prominent liberal author David Grossman wrote in Ha'aretz (August 15): "We should all take a deep breath right now and remind ourselves that, in the final analysis, the days to come are days of mourning for all Israelis. Mourning for the personal and ideological pain of the settlers whose dreams have been shattered; mourning for the fact that Israel was drawn into such a dangerous and unrealistic adventure like the creation of Gush Katif; mourning for the fact that the state brought itself to the place where it was forced to do such a violent, warlike and brutal thing to thousands of its citizens; mourning for the abyss that is being created inside our home, and for the disaster that could befall us very soon; and mourning for the situation in which we are trapped, Jew against Jew with a foreign, naked hostility that stands in complete, existential contradiction to our own interests.... At the end of the day, the uprooting of the settlements and the people is an act in which all Israeli citizens have a role and responsibility, whatever their beliefs."

#### V. "A Disaster Foretold"

Conservative columnist Nadav Haetzni wrote in Maariv (August 15): "Whatever happens, there will be no disengagement. The implementation of Sharon's plan will booby-trap Israel: the more power is left in its hands -- at border crossings, in the security 'envelope' -- we'll be perceived as responsible for everything in the Gaza Strip. The more power we relinquish, the more dangerous the freedom of action granted to the terror state that will arise. This, 'disengagement' -- the false concept born of a prime ministerial spin -- will assume its correct meaning. Real disengagement from the Palestinians won't take place, but emergent disengagement among the various components of Israeli society will definitely be achieved."

#### VI. "On the Eve of the Gate's Closing"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (August 15): "Sharon can't respond to Qassam rocket fire emanating from behind those settlements he wishes to evacuate. The Western and Arab world won't allow him a proper response that wouldn't take the civilian Palestinian population into consideration. We have already hear the voice of [Attorney General] Meni Mazuz, who said that uncontrolled artillery fire wouldn't be allowed and that it would be viewed as a war crime. In conjunction with the United Torah Judaism Knesset members, Likud ministers and Knesset members can still bring down the immoral foundation of Sharon's leadership and government.... This would save Israel from a harsh catastrophe -- Heaven forbid -- should the deportation decree indeed be implemented."

#### VII. "Hopefully, Only the First Step"

Editor-in-Chief Bassam Jaber wrote in left-leaning, Arabic-language weekly Panorama (August 12): "I'm writing this article while only few hours separate us from the withdrawal plan, which the Prime Minister Sharon described as the most complicated and difficult step facing Israel... We believe that the extreme right's opposition reflects the fear of the settlers and their supporters about the next steps.... We are among those who believe that the withdrawal plan is one step on the way to a complete withdrawal from the Palestinian territories.... We believe that the withdrawal from Gaza is for the benefit of both Israelis and Palestinians, since no one really knows what would have happened if no separation was made between the two nations.... Our belief is that this withdrawal is an initial step that will be followed by many others, despite Sharon's statements that reflect the opposite, which we believe are only his way to reduce pressure on him from fanatic Rabbis who want to keep Israel amidst ongoing clashes with the Palestinians and the neighboring Arab countries."

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